

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY LONDON

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TAGS: PFOR, MT, IS, PLO

SUBJECT: MEDITERRANEAN YOUTH CONFERENCE ENDORSES

"PALESTINIAN RIGHTS" AND PRODUCES MALTESE

CALL FOR THE U.S. AND USSR TO LEAVE THE MED

REF: VALLETTA 1343 (NOTAL); VALLETTA 0557 (NOTAL)

1. THE MALTESE YOUNG SOCIALIST LEAGUE (ONE OF THE COMPLEX
OF ORGANIZATIONS CONNECTED WITH PRIME MINISTER MINTOFF'S

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LABOR PARTY) HELD A CONFERENCE IN MALTA NOVEMBER 18-21

FOR "SOCIALIST AND PROGRESSIVE YOUTHS FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN

REGION." THE ANNOUNCED PURPOSE OF THE CONFERENCE WAS TO DISCUSS THE "POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION OF THE REGION AND YOUTH EXCHANGES." CONFERENCE SESSIONS WERE HELD AT THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE GENERAL WORKERS UNION (MALTA'S LARGEST LABOR UNION), ANOTHER PRO-MINTOFF ORGANIZATION.

2. DELEGATES REPRESENTING "SOCIALIST YOUTH GROUPS" FROM FRANCE, ITALY, GREECE, LIBYA, SPAIN, MOROCCO, PORTUGAL AND YUGOSLAVIA ATTENDED THE CONFERENCE. THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION ALSO WAS REPRESENTED, AND BELGIAN AND SWEDISH SOCIALIST GROUPS SENT OBSERVERS.

3. ALTHOUGH IT WAS ADVERTISED IN ADVANCE THAT PRIME MINISTER MINTOFF WOULD MAKE THE OPENING AND/OR CLOSING ADDRESSES TO THE CONFERENCE, HE IN FACT DID NEITHER. GOM MINISTER OF EDUCATION JOSEPH CASSAR REPLACED MINTOFF AT THE OPENING SESSION, WHILE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER ANTON BUTTIGIEG WAS THE PINCH-HITTER AT THE FINAL "RALLY," WHICH WAS HELD AT A SMALL, SECOND-CLASS MOVIE THEATER. THE DELEGATES ALSO WERE RECEIVED BY PRESIDENT SIR ANTHONY MAMO WHILE THEY WERE IN MALTA.

4. TWO BASIC THEMES EMERGED FROM THE CONFERENCE: (1) REAL "PEACE" IN THE MEDITERRANEAN WOULD REQUIRE THAT BOTH SUPERPOWERS (I.E. THE UNITED STATES AND THE USSR) LEAVE THE AREA; AND (2) THE "RIGHTS" OF THE PALESTINIAN ARABS MUST BE "RESTORED," AT ISRAEL'S EXPENSE. THESE THEMES FEATURED PROMINENTLY IN THE REMARKS MADE BEFORE THE CONFERENCE BY MINISTERS CASSAR AND BUTTIGIEG, AS WELL AS THOSE OF SALVU SANT, PRESIDENT OF THE MALTA LABOR PARTY.

5. REFERRING TO MALTA'S STAND AT THE CSCE, MINISTER CASSAR SAID THE GOM FIRMLY BELIEVES THERE CAN BE NO PEACE IN EUROPE WITHOUT DETENTE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THAT THE SOUTHERN FLANK OF EUROPE, WHICH INCLUDES NOT ONLY THE SEA BUT ALL THE COUNTRIES BORDERING IT, MUST BE CONSIDERED IN ANY DETENTE ARRANGEMENTS. HE
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ADDED, "WE HAVE ALWAYS MAINTAINED THE BELIEF THAT THE SUPERPOWERS SHOULD LEAVE THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA. IT HAS BEEN A HARD JOB TO PERSUADE SOME COUNTRIES (OF THIS), ESPECIALLY THE SUPERPOWERS, ALTHOUGH THEY ARE ALIENS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN. THE SUPERPOWERS ARE NOT HERE BECAUSE OF CULTURAL, EDUCATIONAL OR ECONOMIC REASONS, THEY MUST HAVE SOME ULTERIOR MOTIVE TO BE HERE." THE IMPLICATION OF THE MINISTER'S REMARKS WAS THAT IF THE U.S. AND THE U.S.S.R. WOULD ONLY LEAVE, THEY "PEACE" WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE MUCH EASIER TO ACHIEVE

IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA.

6. IN HIS SPEECH TO THE CONFERENCE, MALTA LABOR PARTY PRESIDENT SANT EMPHASIZED PRIME MINISTER MINTOFF'S "UNCEASING EFFORTS" TO FIND A "SOLUTION" TO THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS, CLAIMING THAT MINTOFF'S CONCERN WITH THIS PROBLEM GOES BACK AS FAR AS 1956 "WHEN MALTA WAS STILL A COLONY." SANT SUMMARIZED MALTA'S POLICY TOWARD THE MIDDLE EAST AS FOLLOWS:

"ON THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE WE VOTED FOR, AND HAVE BACKED CONSISTENTLY, THE UNITED NATIONS RESOLUTION OF 1969 UNDER WHICH PEACE CAN BE MADE AFTER ISRAEL HAS RETURNED TO THE BORDERS IT HAD PREVIOUS TO THE 1967 FLARE-UP. WE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN IN FAVOR OF A STRONG, INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN NATION, AND THAT IS WHY THIS WEEK WE HAVE WELCOMED THE PALESTINIAN DELEGATION WITH OPEN ARMS. NO RACE SHOULD HAVE ITS LANDS TAKEN AWAY FROM HER AND ITS RIGHTS USURPED, AND THE PALESTINIANS SHOULD BE NO EXCEPTION."

7. DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER BUTTIGIEG'S CLOSING REMARKS ALSO STRONGLY ENDORSED THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE. HE SAID THAT MALTA WOULD CONTINUE TO SUPPORT "THE PEOPLE OF PALESTINE BECAUSE WE CAN UNDERSTAND THEIR SUFFERINGS, FOR THE MALTESE HAVE ALSO FOUGHT FOR THEIR FREEDOM AND SUFFERED FOR IT." HE ADDED THAT "ISRAEL HAD IRRITATED THE WORLD WITH ITS DETERMINATION NOT TO HONOR UN RESOLUTIONS CALLING UPON IT TO WITHDRAW TO ITS 1967 BORDERS." DR. BUTTIGIEG MAINTAINED THAT MALTA DESIRED A "PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEMS."

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HE SAID THAT "NO COUNTRY INVOLVED SHOULD BE DESTROYED AND ITS PEOPLE DRIVEN INTO THE SEA, BUT WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT THE NATIONAL RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLE OF PALESTINE MUST BE RESTORED."

8. THE CONFERENCE WAS ALSO ADDRESSED BY A DELEGATE FROM LIBYA AND BY A PLO REPRESENTATIVE, YAH YA SAID HUSSEIN (SIC), BOTH OF WHOM SOUNDED SIMILAR PRO-PALESTINIAN AND ANTI-SUPERPOWER THEME.

9. COMMENT: THIS CONFERENCE WAS NOTABLE ONLY IN THE SENSE THAT IT AFFORDED PRIME MINISTER MINTOFF ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO EXPOUND HIS WELL-KNOWN MEDITERRANEAN AND MIDDLE-EASTERN POLICIES THROUGH THE MOUTHS OF HIS MINISTERS AND PARTY SUPPORTERS. THE FINAL PUBLIC MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE WAS ADVERTISED AS "A RALLY IN SUPPORT OF THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE," AND THE WHOLE CONFERENCE HAD STRONG PRO-ARAB, ANTI-ISRAELI OVERTONES,

WHICH DOUBTLESS PLEASED MINTOFF'S GOOD "FRIEND" QADHAFI.
IT IS NOT KNOWN EXACTLY HOW REPRESENTATIVE THE DELEGATES
TO THE CONFERENCE WERE, BUT IT WAS VERY OBVIOUS THAT
MANY OF THEM WERE SOMEWHAT ELDERLY "YOUTH LEADERS".
THE SAME WAS TRUE OF MANY MALTESE PARTICIPANTS AS WELL.
HOWEVER, THIS TYPE OF SELF-SERVING AFFAIR IS DEAR TO
MINTOFF'S HEART AND HELPS KEEP HIS IMAGE AS A "WORLD
STATESMAN" BEFORE THE MALTESE PUBLIC. SMITH

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